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ABSTRACT

Italian-Americans such as industrialist Lee Iacocca, architect Robert Venturi, film-maker Brian De Palma, and writer Gay Talese have contributed to the emergence of ethnic groups as a major force in the cultural and business life of the United States. What is not widely appreciated, however, is the cultural, religious, craft, and family base which made possible the success of such individuals. By presenting an exhibit on Italian-American life in the Delaware Valley, the Balch Institute hopes to fill this knowledge gap and show how the ancestors of today's Italian-Americans found their "American dream" through hard work, religion, family, and community. This catalog of the exhibit contains selected photographs of the exhibit artifacts, an exposition regarding Italian immigrants to Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey, and an article on the changing role of the Italian-American religious festival. (BZ)

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Italian-American Traditions: Family and Community

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Italian-American Traditions: Family and Community

an exhibition in the Museum of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies

Co-sponsored
by
The Italian Folk Arts Federation
of America
Partially supported by a grant
from the Pennsylvania Humanities
Council and by a gift from
Mr. and Mrs. Harold A. Sorgenti,
as well as private donations

October 11, 1985 – January 4, 1986

PREFACE

Most of us have heard of Lee Iacocca the industrialist, Robert Venturi the architect, Brian De Palma the film-maker and Gay Talese the writer. They have all contributed to the emergence of Italian-Americans as a major force in the cultural and business life of the nation.

What most Americans do not appreciate, however, is the cultural, religious, craft and family base which made possible the success of individuals such as those named above. By presenting an exhibit on Italian-American life in the Delaware Valley, the Balch Institute hopes to fill this gap in our knowledge and to show how the ancestors of today's Italian-Americans found their "American dream" through hard work, religion, family and community. It is a story of which all Italian-Americans can be proud and one which the Balch Institute is pleased to present.

M. Mark Stolarik
President

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies is delighted to co-sponsor **"Italian-American Traditions: Family and Community"** with the Italian Folk Arts Federation of America. IFAFA is an outgrowth of the Italian Folk Art Project initiated in 1977 at the Nationalities Service Center of Philadelphia under the leadership of Cav. Elba Farabegoli Gurzau. The exhibition is part of a larger, joint effort on the part of the Balch Library and Museum to develop and maintain a permanent Italian-American Research Collection—encompassing photographs, documents, artifacts, works of art and other materials.

Guest Curator Grace Russoniello, an educator in the field of Italian language and Italian-American culture, has shown extraordinary skill and insight in organizing the exhibition and in authoring the essay included here. She was assisted by a thirteen-member Advisory Board: Elba Farabegoli Gurzau; Thora Jacobsen Sorgini; The Honorable Nicholas Cipriani; Dr. Rose Basile Green; Dominic Liberi, Esq.; Professor Jerre Mangione; Dorothy Marcucci; Loretta Marsella; Joseph Monte; Rachel Munafo, Esq.; Michael Rainone, Esq.; Frank Rossi; and Bridgette Termini.

A team of volunteers and interns worked under the direction of Grace Russoniello. Andrew Chalfen served as Research Assistant in the early stages of the project. Michael Chiarappa conducted field work and collected a variety of materials in South Jersey and Chestnut Hill. Elizabeth Haller and Jennifer Way located and assembled the works of fine art included in the exhibition, benefiting from the assistance of Frank Gasparro.

Over eighty donors and lenders are represented in this exhibition. The Institute is very grateful for their support: Herman Alessi, for the

Delaware Valley Morra League; Detta Amabili; Joseph A. Amari; American Museum of Glass at Wheaton Village; American Museum of Immigration; Severo Antonelli; Louis Angelini; The Athenaeum; John J. Baranzano; Mrs. Richard Bare estate; Mr. and Mrs. Gerardo Belfiore; Dr. Joseph Bentivegna; Vincent Bilotta; Theresa F. Bucchieri; John Capuzzi Gallery; Gina Carano; Martha Carina; Joseph Cascio; Rosemarie Certo; Frank Ciocari; Diane Chillemi; Livia Colavito; Coca-Cola Company; Dr. Angelo B. Costa; Alicia Del Vecchio Cowan; Sara Crimeldi; Vincent Cuffari, for the 38th Ward Bocce Club; Department of Community Programs, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Catherine DiFeliciantonio; Anthony DiFlorio; Theresa DiMarco; Adele DiRenzo; Mary Duva; Elsmer Marble & Granite Company; Fante's Inc.; Louis Filippi; Rose and Angelo Fiorani; Fiorella's Sausage Company; Free Library of Philadelphia; Natalie Nai Garosi; Frank Gasparro; Dina Gentile; A. Robert Giorgio; Mary Girolami; Anthony Giunta; Elba Farabegoli Gurzau; Mary Ianni; Natalie Greco Iocco; King of Peace Church; Tony Lamberti; Mary Leone; Marie A. Lederer; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Maccarone; Louis Mallace; Dorothy Marcucci; Rosa Zagari-Marinzoli; Loretta Marsella; Justine Mataleno; Betty Mongelluzzo; Rachel Munafo; Nello Nai; Gladys Nai; Mr. and Mrs. Attilio Naimoli; Napoleone Colajanni Mutual Aid Society; Carolyn Nicosia; Maria Nociforo; Theresa Onesti; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Society; Hammonton, New Jersey; Sylvia Paraje; Eugene Paloni, Sr.; Mr. and Mrs. D. Pino; Port of History Museum; Colleen Prince; Anna Reuther; Mary Ricci; Rosina Rucci; Louis Russoniello; St. Anthony Society, Philadelphia; St. Donato Church; St. Mary Magdelan de' Pazzi Church; Iva Shindler; Mrs. Polda Smaniotto; Thora and Antonio Sorgini; Dr. James Tanis; Brigette and Vincent Termini; Joseph Termini and family; Marie Sabelli Tomasso; Urban Archives Center, Temple University; and Otto Zinnie.

The Institute's Education Department has scheduled a variety of public programs in conjunction with the exhibition. The Honorable Lisa Richette and Congressman Thomas Foglietta have kindly provided assistance in planning related activities.

On behalf of the Guest Curator, I would also like to acknowledge Rosina Rucci, who helped locate artifacts in South Philadelphia; Justine Mataleno, whose collection efforts in Delaware proved invaluable; and Dorothy Noyes, whose research on Italian community and church-based organizations led to some unique findings.

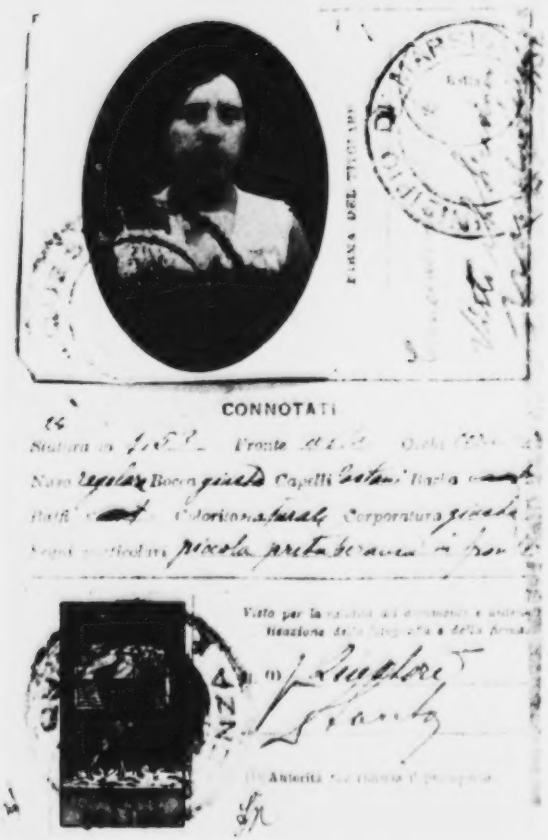
Lanny Bergner designed the exhibition with considerable skill and inventiveness. M. Mark Stolarik provided editorial assistance with the catalogue; Joan Guerin developed its creative design. Catherine Swan and Patricia Proscino Lusk provided curatorial assistance with the help of Wendy Kuhn, Roberta Wue, and Carla Zimmerman. The Museum is also grateful for the assistance of the Board of Trustees and the other members of the Institute's Board and staff, as well as the exhibition installation team. I would also like to acknowledge the services of Professional Color Processing Labs, Inc. and Garrison Printing.

"Italian-American Traditions: Family and Community" is partially supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and by a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Harold Sorgenti, as well as other private donations.

Gail F. Stern
Museum Director

HELLO AMERICA.
THIS IS ROSETO.
I LIVE IN THE SPLENDOR OF YOUR MOUNTAINS,
AND LAY MY HEAD ON YOUR GREEN FIELDS.
YOUR FRESH SPRINGS QUENCH MY THIRST,
AND YOUR FERTILE SOIL EASES MY HUNGER.
I AM GRATEFUL TO BE YOUR CHILD."

from *"Letter to America"*
by Roseto resident Jennie Romano



Passport of Antonetta Leone, stamped in Naples, 1921.
(courtesy of Mary Duva)

Italians came to America with some hesitation. As immigrants to Eastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey, they were latecomers with persistent misgivings about their eventual success in America. They realized that as aliens they were a new breed who had to work harder and struggle more than those ethnic groups which had preceded them. The struggle took place in the anthracite coal mines of Scranton and Wilkes Barre, in the slate quarries of Roseto, in the cranberry bogs and the fruit orchards of South Jersey and in urban Philadelphia, where they settled in great numbers between 1880 and 1920. In these locales, as diverse one from the other as their own *"paesi"* in Italy, the newly-arrived immigrants tentatively laid the foundations for a vibrant Italian-American community.

Bound by the ties of family and *"paesani,"* many Italian immigrant men were destined to make their homes in the Delaware Valley. Calabresi, Abruzzesi, Siciliani, and Pugliesi identified themselves not only by the region from which they had emigrated, but more specifically by the province and finally by the town where they were born, a town about which they would speak with intense loyalty and undying affection. Despite the brutal economic straits which forced their evacuation, they were emotionally bound to their *"paesani"* in such a way, so they believed, that only they could understand. These ties ran through their songs, their superstitions, their ceremonial traditions, their dialects. During the uncertain years following immigration, familiar faces and familiar words brought comfort to those who had travelled alone, anticipating, of course, that enough money could be earned in just a few years to secure the passage of a wife and children, a mother or a father.

A CHILD ADAPTS TO EVERYTHING. IT WAS THE OLDER PEOPLE WHO SUFFERED, THOSE UPROOTED HUMAN BEINGS WHO FACED THE SHORES OF THE UNKNOWN LAND WITH QUAKING HEARTS."

Leonard Covello-Autobiography

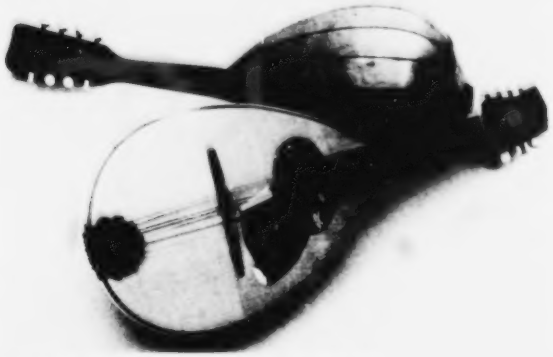
The eldest children of Nicola and Antoinette Vitacolonna, c. 1912. (photo courtesy of Marie A. Lederer)

Maria Christina Leone of Marsiconuovo (Basilicata). (photo courtesy of Maria Leone).

The Italian community grew in the environs of Christian Street in South Philadelphia, Garibaldi Street in Roseto and Scott Street in Wilmington. With the mother as the central figure, social life took the form of family, club and church. Although they recognized existing class distinctions among themselves, Italians speaking a common language could fraternize in a *"Little Italy"* which existed as a semi-independent universe all its own. This fraternal spirit encompassed weddings and christenings, street processions in honor of a patron saint, and outings where *"stornelli"* would resound from mandolins and bocce would be played on an outdoor court. Likewise, culinary traditions brought families together; variety in the structure of the Italian meal and the claim of superior regional preparations of pasta, tomato sauce (*"gravy"* in Philadelphia) and holiday pastries further supported the tendency to feast with one's own. A burgeoning Italian community resulted in the demand for imported products (coffee, olive oil, salami) and the expansion of business opportunities for grocery store owners. Butchers and bakers who could cater to the particular tastes of their clientele were also in sudden demand, and under the canopies of their shops *"paesani"* continued to socialize.

Bankers who were often bilingual operated early on as steamship-ticket agents, real-estate brokers and business advisors. They were especially useful to the illiterate who could not manage to handle their own correspondence to family and friends. V. D'Ambrosio Company at Eighth and Fitzwater and C.C.A. Baldi and Brothers on South Eighth Street were two of many such establishments in Philadelphia's *"Little Italy."*[1]

A Sunday afternoon bocce game at the Nicholas Pucciarelli Bocce Courts, 66th and Vine Streets in West Philadelphia, c. 1980. (photo courtesy of Rosemarie Certo)



Mandolins, c. 1900. (courtesy of Dominic Pino and Colleen Prince)

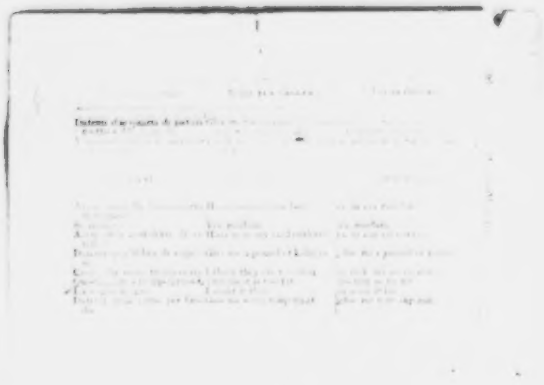
Finally, for those who were literate, Italian-language periodicals such as ***"L'Opinione"*** in Philadelphia and ***"Il Minatore"*** in Scranton announced births, deaths, and marriages, honors received by outstanding scholars, musicians and professionals, meetings and festivals of local clubs, and the latest news from Italy. Numerous Italian radio broadcasts of the 'thirties and 'fourties served a similar purpose, as Italians of all educational backgrounds could enjoy the entertainment and news they provided.

Philadelphia has the distinction of being the first city which attempted to recoup the loss of the Italian faithful with the establishment of a *"national parish."* In August, 1852, Bishop John Neumann granted Italians regular use of Cathedral Chapel for masses in their own language; a month later he purchased land on Montrose Street, near Seventh, for the construction of St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi Church.[2] Later Italians would see the establishment of similar parishes in the city, Saint Lucy's in Scranton, Saint Joseph's in Hammonton, New Jersey, and Our Lady of Pompei in Vineland. Each attempted to unite the Italian community across regional and social lines. Through new associations fostered by the church some Northern Italians married those from the *"Mezzogiorno"* and the wealthy joined the poor in worship. It was probably as a result of this institution, more than any other, that immigrants from all regions came to identify themselves as Italians.

"YOUR OWN PEOPLE LOVE YOU TRULY, THE OTHER PEOPLE'S LOVE IS LIKE NOTHING."

proverb repeated by Lucia Sbrocchi, in an interview in Roseto with Carla Bianco

Handbooks of three Italian mutual benefit societies active in Philadelphia and Dunmore, PA.



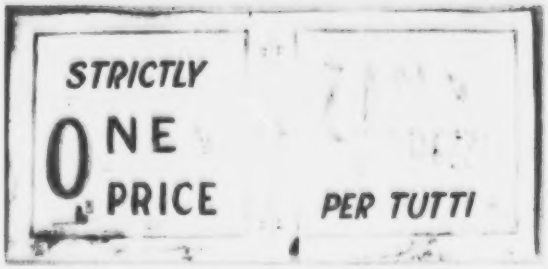
Phonetics lesson which appeared in an English handbook for Italian immigrants. (courtesy of Theresa DiMarco)

Linguistic exclusivity and the alienation from *"americani"* which often accompanied it led most early Italian immigrants to affiliate by means of fraternal, civic and religious organizations. These clubs, along with the Italian newspapers and theatrical groups, helped to ease the confusion of life in the New World, yet in a way contributed to the continued segregation of the community. The Serro and Calvaruso Society, which held meetings for over sixty years, claimed members only from the two towns in the province of Messina from which it took its name. Mutual benefit societies, such as the Napoleone Coljanni and the Basilicatese of Philadelphia, the Societa San Cataldo of Dunmore, and Vineland's Nord Italia Society (which at its peak claimed over 150 members), functioned expressly for the immigrants in need. They intended to provide a decent funeral for their members, assist in case of illness and raise money for the passage to America of friends and relatives. Italians, it would seem, could trust none other than their *"paesani"* with such matters, as early immigrant attitudes mimicked those in Italy,

> *"Beyond the family clan with its blood allegiances, the villages and the parish church, there was no friend and no guarantee of justice and respect.*[3]

Certain of these societies even helped found settlement houses which conducted programs specifically designed to introduce the immigrant family to American ways of life. Classes in reading, writing and general hygiene were offered by competent instructors who understood the nuances of the conflicting culture. But with very few exceptions, these societies ceased to fill a void for second and third-generation Italians and so gradually evolved into social clubs which sponsored dinners and dances for their members who continued to seek fraternity with their *"paesani."* Palumbo's Restaurant, which had once served as a boarding house for immigrants from the Abruzzi, was often the setting for such affairs. Here on Catherine Street an Italian band—perhaps the celebrated Verdi Band of Norristown—might perform, and one of the many Italian-run photo studios along South Broad Street would be present to record the festivities.

Larger fraternal orders, such as the Order Sons of Italy and the Italian Sons and Daughters of America, afforded Italian-Americans greater opportunities in the community at large. No longer divided regionally, Italian-Americans presented programs which attempted to acknowledge the



Sign (c. 1918) on display in the former shoe store of Luigi DiMarco at 764 South 9th Street in South Philadelphia. (courtesy of Theresa DiMarco)

cultural traditions of their *"patria"*, yet glorify their achievements here in America. In addition, these larger organizations promoted a strong defense against intolerance and *"character assassination"* directed towards them by the American media.

However, even among the first generation there were those who shied away from exclusive Italian organizations and instead joined mixed societies, such as the Foresters of America. Among the second generation this tendency was accentuated, so that as the non-immigrant sector of the Italian population became proportionately larger, the importance of the Italian organization declined.[4]

Although significant settlements of Italians existed in West Philadelphia, North Philadelphia (near 22nd and Indiana), Frankford, Germantown, Chestnut Hill and Camden, New Jersey, the greatest concentration of Italian immigrant families in the Delaware Valley was then, and is today, in South Philadelphia. By the beginning of the 20th century, the *"City of Brotherly Love"* was very much a city of isolated neighborhoods, each with its own character determined by the kind of work done there and the ethnicity of its residents. On the Italian-occupied streets of the city, homes were an enormous source of pride to those whose former peasant status had left them unable to own the land on which they toiled. Through centuries of domination by invaders who enslaved them on their own soil, they had remained powerless, landless and consequently hopeless. In the United States they would distinguish themselves as barbers, tailors, shoemakers, stone cutters, masons, carpenters and ironworkers. Many of these men formed their own societies centered around their work. In Chestnut Hill the Filippi and Marcolina families, from the Alpine region near Friuli, made their mark as perhaps the finest iron and stone craftsmen in the Delaware Valley.

The railroads attracted a substantial number of unskilled Italians who laid track in Germantown, South Philadelphia, and the outlying areas of Conshohocken, Norristown and West Chester.[5] Highly skilled Italian glassblowers in South Jersey furnaces were noted and emulated by their co-workers who hailed from other European countries. Great opportunity was also to be found in Philadelphia's clothing industry. Though Italians would not make their fortunes here, they generally earned a decent living and provided well for their families.

"Downtown," in South Philadelphia, many Italians seized the opportunity to establish a retail shop on the ground floor of their homes, as row houses were easily transformed into combined

The 800 block of Christian Street in South Philadelphia, c. 1920. (photo courtesy of Fiorella Brothers)

Mr. and Mrs. Corrado Amabili, in front of their mushroom house in Hockessin, DE. (photo courtesy of the Amabili family)

store/dwellings. The DiMarco, Monticelli and Fiorella family businesses represented only a few of the many hundreds of such businesses which flourished in *"Little Italy."*

South of Philadelphia, in the rural community of Hockessin, Delaware, Italians were drawn to cultivate mushrooms after the arrival of Corrado Amabili. A former Pittsburgh coal miner, Amabili had inspected the area of Hockessin in the late twenties and, with his *"paesani"*, the Antonini family of Wilmington, had found it desirable for the production of mushrooms.[6] Amabili's return to Italy for a bride was followed by enormous growth and prosperity in the new *"colony,"* as other Italian families joined them in the highly specialized enterprise.

In Northeastern Pennsylvania, only immigrants from the villages of central Sicily (San Cataldo, Caltanisetta, Canicatti) joined the Irish, Welsh, Poles and Slovaks in the mines; Italians from other regions worked in the trades and industry and opened their own shops, as did their *"paesani"* in the larger urban centers. As islanders, the central Sicilians and their fathers had worked in the sulphur mines and were thus prepared for the insufferable heat and unpredictable conditions of the mines. Until World War II, the Lackawanna and Luzerne County railroad yards were filled with hundreds of tons of anthracite coal which was then shipped to New York State and elsewhere. It is not surprising that Italians from many regions settled in the lively and bustling towns of Scranton and Wilkes Barre, where on weekends Italian musical and theatrical groups from New York City and Philadelphia performed for an appreciative audience.

Vincenzo Varsaci with his orange tree, in a greenhouse on his farm, Beverly, NJ, 1947. (photo courtesy of Martha Carina)

Many of Philadelphia's Italian tailors, barbers, and craftsmen brought their families to South Jersey during the picking season, but the opportunity to buy an expanse of land, to earn a living in the same fashion as they had in Italy, proved irresistible to certain immigrants. In the late 1800's substantial settlements arose in Hammonton, Vineland and throughout the southern portion of the state, where Italians cleared the pine barrens.

After years tending to an always ailing wife, Philadelphian Vincenzo Varsaci was advised by his Italian-American physician to *"take her to the countryside where she will breathe some fresh air and drink some good wine"*[7] It was an opportune time for significant change, as Varsaci had laid trolley track, worked in the shipyards, on the railroad, and in a paint factory downtown. He had even returned to Italy at age 21 to fulfill a three-year tour of duty in the Italian army. However, it was only after his success as an American farmer that he felt himself to be in control of his destiny. The mark of true success was his farm, replete with peas, stringbeans, potatoes, peaches and corn; the mark of his identity was the one orange tree he kept in a greenhouse—a symbol of his link to the citrus groves of his native Sicily from which he had departed at age eighteen.

Rosaries made especially in Italy for the Our Lady of Mt Carmel Feast in Hammonton N.J., July 1985 (photo courtesy of Dr. James Turk)

The town of Roseto, founded in the 1880's by immigrants from Roseto Valfortore (Apulia), rose to national attention in the late 1950's when a team of physicians headed by cardiologist Stewart Wolf found that the Italian community along the slate belt of East Central Pennsylvania was virtually immune from heart disease. This, they were sure, was due not to a particular lifestyle or routine (Rosetans were generally overweight and lacked exercise) but rather to the cohesion of families with relationships based on mutual support. Folk beliefs, traditional songs and even the Our Lady of Mount Carmel feast in July helped keep them brimming with good hearts and sound minds. However, in the decades since the initial study, as younger Rosetans abandoned the principles of mutual support and the solidarity of the community was tested, a dramatic deterioration in general health was observed. The process of Americanization, at least in Roseto, has had negative consequences.

To a larger degree various stages of rebellion among second and third-generation Italian-Americans have resulted in positive gains. Throughout Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey, and elsewhere, children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants are emerging as leaders in the fields of law, medicine, business and the arts. And inroads in the sphere of politics are seldom subjected to the suspicious eye of those who would easily associate Italian-Americans with factions of organized crime. Moreover, there is evidence that Italian-Americans are enjoying the sudden discovery of *"Italian culture"* by the general public. As the media focuses its attention on traditional Italian cooking and the masters of fashion and automobile design, Americans of Italian descent

exhibit a greater willingness to explore their own cultural traditions. The Italian Folk Arts Federation of America claims a revival in regional folk song and dance, with four groups already established in Eastern Pennsylvania alone. And in the quiet town of Jessup, just north of Scranton, the descendents of immigrants from Gubbio have fashioned a *"Race of the Saints"* to take place each spring in accordance with regional tradition. The celebration of Italian ethnicity and the various forms it takes have led to a more complete definition of the richness of Italian-American life.

Grace Russoniello
Guest Curator

FOOTNOTES

1. Richard N. Juliani, "The Origin and Development of the Italian Community in Philadelphia," in ***The Ethnic Experience in Pennsylvania***, edited by John Bodnar (Lewisburg, PA, 1973), p. 251.

2. Juliani, ibid., p. 234.

3. Silvano M. Tomasi, "The Ethnic Church and the Integration of Italian Immigrants in the United States," in ***The Italian Experience in the United States*** (New York, 1970), p. 177.

4. Lawrence F. Pisani, ***The Italian in America*** (New York, 1957), p. 159.

5. Juliani, "The Origin and Development of the Italian Community in Philadelphia," p. 237.

6. Priscilla Thompson, ***Pockets of Settlement, The Italian-American Experience in Delaware*** (Wilmington, 1983), p. 42.

7. Martha Carina, in a conversation with the author, July 1985.

The Changing Role of the Italian-American Religious Festival

The form of Italian saint's-day processions has changed little since the period of immigration. Every June 13th, in the early morning, firecrackers at 62nd and Gray's Ferry Road open the feast of St. Anthony of Padua. A band plays the American and Italian anthems, as the flagbearers come out, and proceeds to the door of John Pace, president of the St. Anthony Society. The standard-bearers of six other societies are then collected, and the procession begins.

Statues of the saints, finishing with St. Anthony, are carried out of Our Lady of Loreto Church and placed on carts. Little girls carry flowers or hold ribbons dangling from the statues where the faithful pin money.

As a house is passed its inhabitants join the procession, following their favorite saint. Neighbors put out lemonade to ease people's thirst during the three-and-a-half hour march. Detours are made to the houses of the very old and the shops of merchants whose support of the festival has been especially generous. For the last block St. Anthony is lifted from his pedestal and carried, a custom revived by Mr. Pace to show how it was in the old days. The walkers stop in front of the church where the priest blesses the statues and offerings. Then the saints and the people go in for Mass.

This marks the end of a week of celebration, including a carnival, nightly band concerts, feasting and fireworks. For the St. Anthony Society it is also the culmination of a year of work: fund-raising through spaghetti dinners and visits to local businessmen, and the booking of bands and entertainments. The festival is completely supported by the Society, and its proceeds go entirely to the parish; past processions built the church and later the school of Our Lady of Loreto.

The Saint Anthony Society participating in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Procession, West Philadelphia, c. 1931. (photo courtesy of Saint Anthony Society)

Such *feste* were the center of Southern Italian religious life. For the immigrant, whose loyalty was not to the abstraction of Italy but to the village of his birth, the *festa* became an important symbolic link. In the early years money was sent home to be pinned on the town patron saint as a matter of family pride, as well as continuing identification.

As more people from a village emigrated a few families would form a society to procure a statue, solicit contributions from *paesani* for a band and fireworks, and recreate the procession in America. The reputation of the home village depended on a good turnout and a strong sense of rivalry persisted even when the village ceased to be the unit of procession participants. For thirty years in Southwest Philadelphia the regionally mixed devotees of St. Anthony vied with the Neapolitan followers of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel for the most magnificent and profitable procession.

Often, as in the St. Anthony Society, the religious confraternity was also a mutual aid group, paying death and disability benefits. This continuation of village reciprocity strengthened the community-bound character of the *festa*.

The independence of the procession, and observance belonging to and stemming from the people, was accentuated as Italian-Americans came into contact with the Irish-dominated Catholic hierarchy. The Irish had endured years of enforced acculturation to Protestant norms both in Ireland and in America, and to them the parading of statues seemed like pagan image-worship. They resented intensely the paucity of Italian offerings at mass, given the huge sums raised for festival fireworks. The Italians, in turn, were traditionally anticlerical and accustomed to a state-supported church of seemingly limitless wealth and influence and felt that the Irish were making them buy the sacraments.

As the Italian population increased, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States instituted national parishes with Italian priests. It became necessary to tolerate the processions and other forms of folk piety, for the people continued to sanction them, and there was a danger of losing the Italians to organized religion.

The priests of national parishes soon realized that such practices were a valuable resource. If Italians did not fill the collection plate they made up for it by lighting candles in the saints' chapels, and the church which sponsored processions could reap their harvest of donations and enthusiasm. To bind the congregation to the parish, Italian priests promoted the *feste* of the church's dedicatory saint and of widely venerated saints like Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. In the 1920's Father Antonio Garritano put notices in ***L'Opinione*** for weeks in advance of the procession of St. Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi describing the attractions of the festival and urging wide participation.

At the same time that the priests encouraged unification of their flock under one saint's banner, the Italians themselves were relaxing their village ties. Years of living in America and a new generation produced an Italian-American identity. As the immigrants aged and the American-born came to fear ridicule, most of the village processions disbanded. The more flourishing processions attracted a parish-wide following, and their regional origins were forgotten. The *festa* now belonged to the neighborhood.

As the years passed even those processions weakened. When other ethnic groups moved into the area the processions often died out entirely. In all-Italian enclaves routes were curtailed and the statues were put on carts for want of men outbidding each other for the honor of carrying them. Responsibility for the procession frequently fell on the parish. From being a dangerously energetic alternative to organized Catholicism, the festival had become a valued sign of religious fervor.

Greater affluence contributed to the decline of processions. John Pace said that, after Our Lady of Loreto's school was dedicated in 1960, "people got lax" and the festivals dwindled. The two processions began to alternate in years, and finally the Mount Carmel Society was subsumed in its former rival.

Many processions still continue in a diminished state. A recent visitor to the *festa* at Holy Savior in Norristown commented on how many people he missed and was told, "The old

people are getting tired, and the young people don't want to do it."

But there are signs of a revival in a new form. The religious feast has become an ethnic festival. The process began with the festival carnivals, which waxed as the processions waned, keeping hold of the young and maintaining the profitability of the event. In the 1970's, particularly in urban churches, ethnic elements came to dominate. Italian folk-music and dance groups were introduced alongside the bands. Other groups were included in their capacity as ethnics: one year Mr. Pace brought in a Scottish troupe in Highland dress to play the bagpipes. The Hammonton, N.J., procession has incorporated a Puerto Rican confraternity with its own saint and statue.

In some cases this change reflects strategy. Father Calabro of Our Lady of Consolation Church in Northeast Philadelphia realized two years ago that their Feast of the Saints was "terminally ill." The parish committee merged it with their carnival and renamed it the "Italian Festival". They arranged a week of entertainments geared to all ages, emphasizing Italian food and music. A public-relations person advertised in the newspapers and put notices in the bulletins of other Italian parishes, to great effect. Father Calabro estimates that this year over a thousand people came on each day of the weekend. The procession itself made only a slight recovery in numbers, and he does not expect it to regain its importance. But he knew that the festival needed outsiders to succeed, and its reshaping has brought them.

Many festivals benefit by attracting outsiders, notably in Hammonton, N.J., where crowds of metropolitan Italians come to celebrate *italianita'* in a pleasant small-town context. However, the element of local community remains primary. John Pace stresses the honoring of the saint and the pride of ethnicity in his procession, saying, "We're here to keep our heritage up," but it is also grounded in strong neighborhood ties.

Mr. Pace has made a point of recruiting young members to the St. Anthony Society, picking them with caution because of the heavy workload that will fall on them. He has carefully cultivated neighborhood businesses. His own family and the children of the neighborhood are drawn into the last-minute preparations. When the original headquarters of the society went up for sale in 1979 he and his wife moved into them; the original St. Anthony statue is in their basement, and Mrs. Pace is frequently called by neighbors in trouble to say a prayer or lay flowers in front of the shrine. There is a deep devotion to St. Anthony in the community.

Equally important to this procession is Mr. Pace's force of character. Young men who have moved away not only return for the festival, but remain active members of the Society, coming in regularly from Frankford or Cherry Hill to do its work out of loyalty to Mr. Pace. More than one local businessman will not make his usual donation unless Mr. Pace comes for it in person. The energy of an individual seems here to sustain what, left to itself, might die out.

In Roseto, Pennsylvania, the weekend of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel festival is still called the "Big Time". Always the occasion for visits from relatives, it is now the time when children come home from larger towns. Participation in the procession has waned as individualistic American values intrude. Dr. Stewart Wolf, who hopes the frustrations of getting and spending will rekindle an appreciation of the Rosetan way of life, felt that this year's increase in the procession's numbers was a "good sign". The procession is a measure of the community's strength, and in more ways than one: John Pace can judge the extent of unemployment in his neighborhood by the weight of the statues' ribbons.

Rarely is the *festa* still the high point of the year, as in Roseto or for the St. Anthony Society. Other dates—the summer vacation, the start of the school year—have superseded the harvest and the saint's day as markers in the lives of ethnic Americans. But the impulse to a visible affirmation of loyalty to a group is alive and well, and it is brought home in the red, white, and green caps from the Italian Festival.

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AND YOUR FERTILE SO
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